

*How Is Your
School District
Performing?*



A look at
Franklin
Public Schools
2004–2006



EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AUDIT COUNCIL
Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

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Alison Fraser

Joseph B. Rappa, Executive Director, Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

VISITING EXAMINATION TEAM

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Joanne Newcombe, Senior Examiner

George Gearhart, Examiner

Linda Greyser, Examiner

Michael Shea, Examiner

William Wassel, Examiner

The five-member Educational Management Audit Council (EMAC) and its agency, the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA), were established by the Massachusetts Legislature in July 2000 to examine public school districts in the commonwealth. The mission of the EMAC and EQA is to provide independent verification of schools' and districts' efforts to promote higher levels of academic achievement among their students, as measured by the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests.

The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability would like to acknowledge the professional cooperation extended to the audit team by the Massachusetts Department of Education; the superintendent of the Franklin Public Schools, Wayne Ogden; the school department staff; and the town officials of Franklin.

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INTRODUCTION

Test scores provide one method of assessing student achievement, but a variety of factors affect student performance. The Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (EQA) was created to examine many of these additional factors by conducting independent audits of schools and districts across the commonwealth. The agency uses these audits to:

- Provide a comprehensive evaluation of each school district's performance;
- Publish annual reports on selected districts' performance;
- Monitor public education performance statewide to inform policy decisions; and
- Provide the public with information that helps the state hold districts and schools, including charter schools, accountable.

In April and May 2007, the EQA conducted an independent examination of the Franklin Public Schools for the period of 2004–2006. The EQA analyzed Franklin students' performance on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests and identified how students in general and in subgroups were performing. The EQA then examined critical factors that affected student performance in six major areas: leadership, governance, and communication; curriculum and instruction; assessment and evaluation; human resource management and professional development; access, participation, and student academic support; and financial and asset management effectiveness and efficiency.

The review was based on documents supplied by the Franklin Public Schools and the Massachusetts Department of Education; correspondence sent prior to the EQA team's site visit; interviews with representatives from the school committee, the district leadership team, school administrators, and teachers; numerous classroom observations; and additional documents submitted while the EQA team visited the district. The report does not take into account documents, revised data, or events that may have occurred after June 2006. However, district leaders were invited to provide more current information.

Putting the Data in Perspective

Franklin, MA



DISTRICT

Population: 29,560
Median family income: \$81,826
Largest sources of employment: Educational, health, and social services; manufacturing
Local government: Town Council, Town Administrator

SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

School committee: 7 members
Number of schools: 11
Student-teacher ratio: 13.7 to 1
Per Pupil Expenditures: \$9,230
Student enrollment:
 Total: 6,136
 White: 93.4 percent
 Hispanic: 1.6 percent
 African-American: 0.9 percent
 Asian-American: 2.8 percent
 Native American: 0.4 percent
 Limited English proficient: 0.3 percent
 Low income: 4.5 percent
 Special education: 14.7 percent

Sources: 2000 U.S. Census and
 Massachusetts Department of Education.

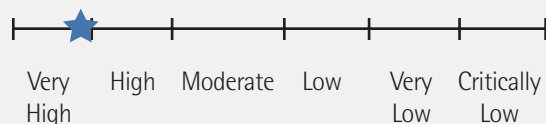
EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AUDIT COUNCIL ACTION

After reviewing this report, the Educational Management Audit Council voted to accept its findings at its meeting on October 24, 2007.

MCAS Performance at a Glance, 2006

	DISTRICT	STATE
Average Proficiency Index	90	78
English Language Arts Proficiency Index	93	84
Math Proficiency Index	86	72

Performance Rating



The Average Proficiency Index is another way to look at MCAS scores. It is a weighted average of student performance that shows whether students have attained or are making progress toward proficiency, which means they have met the state's standards. A score of 100 indicates that all students are proficient. The Massachusetts DOE developed the categories presented to identify performance levels.

HOW DID STUDENTS PERFORM?

Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) Test Results

Students in grades 3–8 and grade 10 are required to take the MCAS tests each year in one or more specified subject areas, including English language arts (ELA), math, and science and technology/engineering (STE). Beginning with the class of 2003, students must pass the grade 10 math and ELA tests to graduate. Those who do not pass on the first try may retake the tests several more times.

The EQA analyzed current state and district MCAS results to determine how well district students as a whole and sub-groups of students performed compared to students throughout the commonwealth, and to the state goal of proficiency. The EQA analysis sought to answer the following five questions:

1. Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

On the 2006 MCAS tests in ELA, math, and STE, eligible students in Franklin participated at levels that met or exceeded the state's 95 percent requirement.

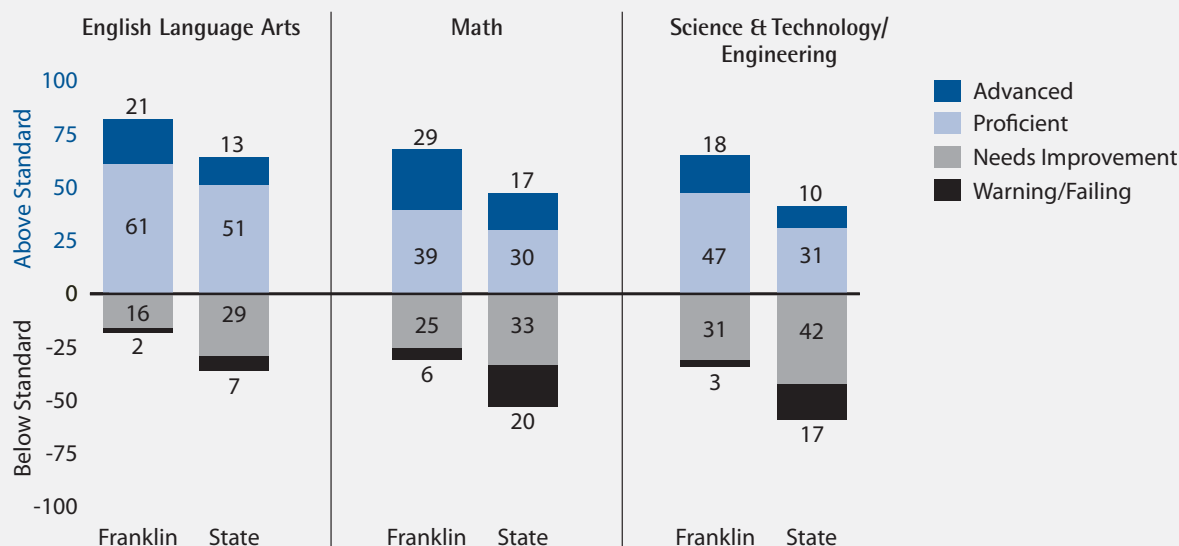
2. Are the district's students reaching proficiency levels on the MCAS examination?

On average, three-fourths of all students in Franklin attained proficiency on the 2006 MCAS tests, much more than that statewide. More than four-fifths of Franklin students attained proficiency in English language arts (ELA), more than two-thirds of Franklin students attained proficiency in math, and nearly two-thirds of Franklin students attained proficiency in science and technology/engineering (STE). Ninety-seven percent of the Class of 2006 attained a Competency Determination.

- Franklin's average proficiency index (API) on the MCAS tests in 2006 was 90 proficiency index (PI) points, 12 PI points greater than that statewide. Franklin's average proficiency gap, the difference between its API and the target of 100, in 2006 was 10 PI points.
- In 2006, Franklin's proficiency gap in ELA was seven PI points, nine PI points narrower than the state's average proficiency gap in ELA. This gap would require an average improve-

FRANKLIN SCORES COMPARED TO STATE AVERAGES, 2006

Percentage of students at each proficiency level on MCAS



ment in performance of less than one PI point annually to achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP). Franklin's proficiency gap in math was 14 PI points in 2006, 14 PI points narrower than the state's average proficiency gap in math. This gap would require an average improvement of less than two PI points per year to achieve AYP. Franklin's proficiency gap in STE was 13 PI points, 16 PI points narrower than that statewide.

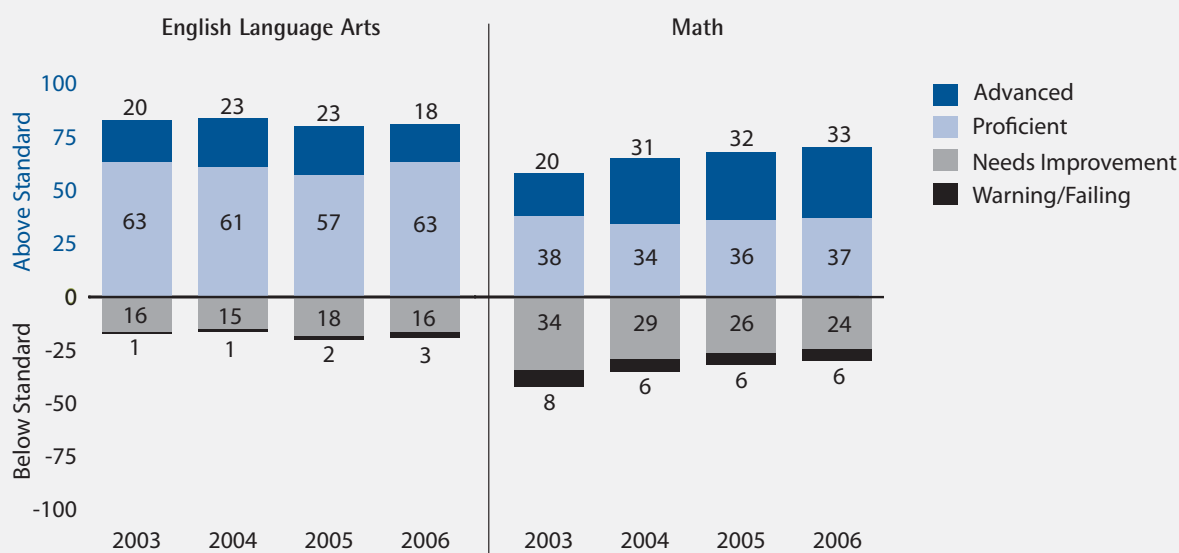
3. Has the district's MCAS test performance improved over time?

Between 2003 and 2006, Franklin's MCAS performance showed slight improvement overall, some improvement in math, a decline in ELA, and was relatively flat in STE.

- The percentage of students scoring in the 'Advanced' and 'Proficient' categories rose by five percentage points between 2003 and 2006, while the percentage of students in the 'Warning/Failing' category remained the same. The average proficiency gap in Franklin narrowed from 13 PI points in 2003 to 11 PI points in 2006, resulting in an improvement rate, or a closing of the proficiency gap, of 15 percent.
- Over the three-year period 2003-2006, ELA performance in Franklin showed a slight decline, at an average of less than one-half PI point annually.
- Math performance in Franklin showed improvement, at an average of nearly one and one-half PI points annually. This resulted in an improvement rate of 25 percent, a rate slightly lower than that required to meet AYP.

FRANKLIN ELA SCORES COMPARED TO MATH SCORES

Percentage of students at each proficiency level on MCAS



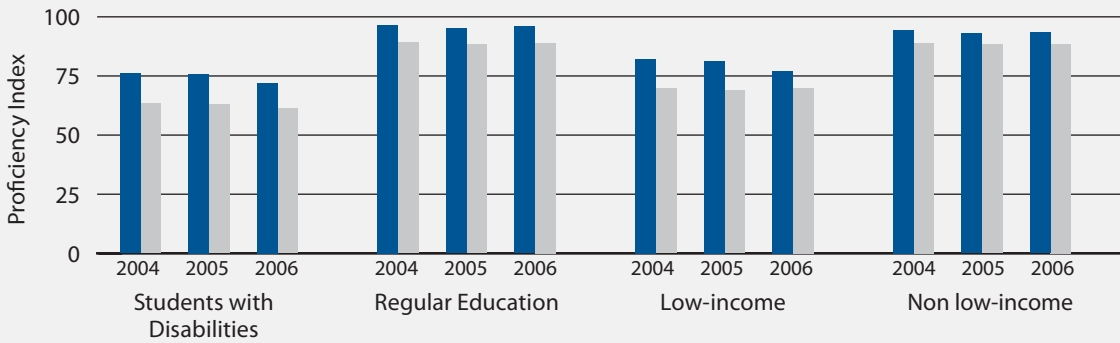
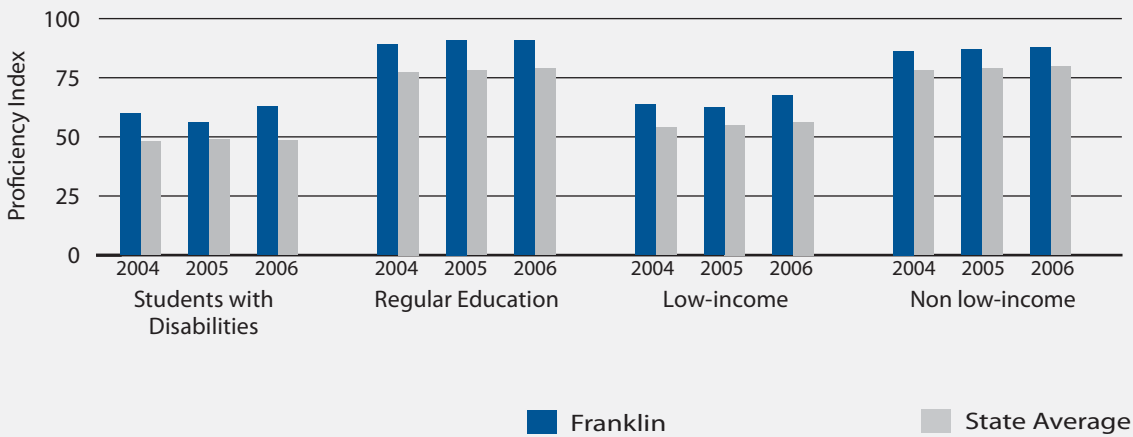
- Between 2004 and 2006, STE performance in Franklin was relatively flat. Although the percentage of students attaining proficiency declined by one percentage point, STE performance increased by approximately one PI point over the two-year period, resulting in an improvement rate of six percent.

4. Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students?

MCAS performance in 2006 varied substantially among subgroups of Franklin students. Of the six measurable subgroups in Franklin in 2006, the gap in performance between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups was 22 PI points in ELA and 31 PI points in math (regular education students, students with disabilities, respectively).

- The proficiency gaps in Franklin in 2006 in both ELA and math were wider than the district average for students with disabilities and low-income students (those participating in the free or reduced-cost lunch program). More than one-third of the students in each subgroup attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gaps in ELA and math were narrower than the district average for regular education students and non low-income students. More than three-fourths of the students in each subgroup attained proficiency.
- The proficiency gap for male students was wider than the district average in ELA but narrower in math, while the proficiency gap for female students was narrower than the district average in ELA but wider in math. For both subgroups, roughly three-fourths of the students attained proficiency.

FRANKLIN STUDENTS' IMPROVEMENT OVER TIME, COMPARED TO STATE AVERAGES

English Language Arts*Math*

5. Has the MCAS test performance of the district's student subgroups improved over time?

The performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in ELA widened from 16 PI points in 2003 to 24 PI points in 2006, and the performance gap between the highest- and lowest-performing subgroups in math narrowed from 33 to 28 PI points over this period.

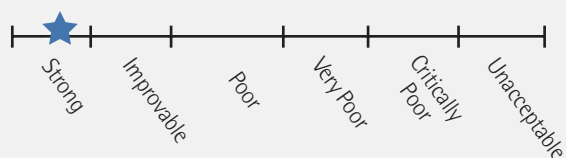
- In Franklin, all student subgroups except regular education students had a decline in performance in ELA between 2003 and 2006. The subgroups with the greater declines in ELA were students with disabilities and low-income students.
- In math, all subgroups in Franklin showed improved performance between 2003 and 2006. The most improved subgroup in math was students with disabilities, while the improvement of low-income students was very slight.

Performance at a Glance

Management Quality Index

The Management Quality Index is a weighted average of the district's performance on 67 indicators that measure the effectiveness of a district's management system. Franklin received the following rating:

Performance Rating:



WHAT FACTORS DRIVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE?

Overall District Management

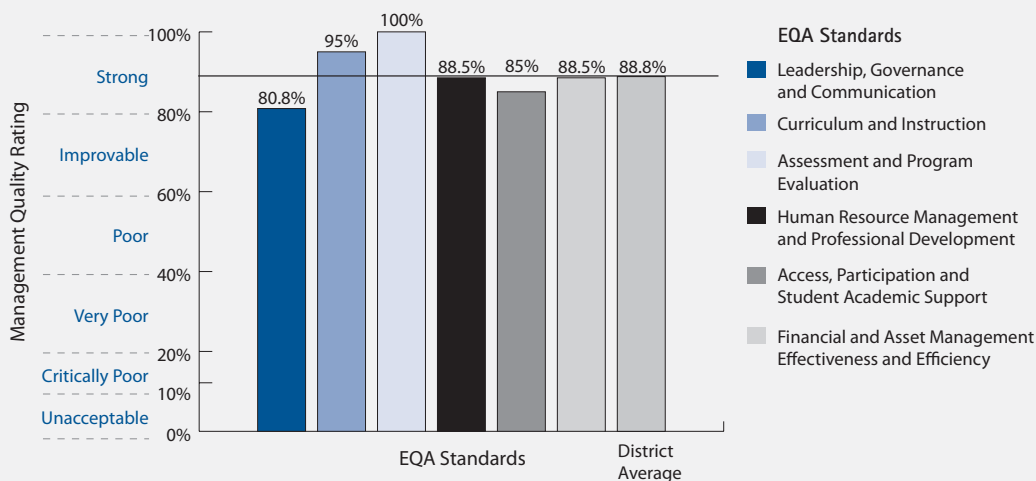
To better understand the factors affecting student scores on the MCAS tests, the EQA analyzes district performance on 67 indicators in six areas: leadership, governance, and communication; curriculum and instruction; assessment and program evaluation; human resource management and professional development; access, participation, and student academic support; and financial and asset management effectiveness and efficiency. Taken together, these factors are a

measure of the effectiveness – or quality – of a district's management system. A score of 100 percent on the Management Quality Index (MQI) means that the district meets the standard and performed at a satisfactory level on all indicators. However, it does not mean the district was perfect.

In 2006, Franklin received an overall MQI score of 'Strong' (88.8 percent). The district performed best on the Assessment and Program Evaluation standard, scoring 'Strong.' It was rated lowest on the Leadership and Governance standard, but still 'Strong.' Given these ratings, the district is performing as expected on the MCAS tests. During the review period, student performance declined slightly in ELA but improved in math. On the following pages, we take a closer look at the district's performance in each of the six standards.

A CLOSER LOOK AT MANAGEMENT QUALITY

Franklin, 2004–2006



Leadership, Governance, and Communication

Ultimately, the success or failure of district leadership was determined by how well all students performed. As measured by MCAS test performance, Franklin ranked among the 'Very High' performing school districts in the commonwealth, with scores that were 'Very High' in ELA and 'High' in math.

Leadership and Communication

The leadership of the Franklin Public Schools consisted of the superintendent and the seven-member school committee. During the period under review, the former superintendent improved collaboration between the school committee, the town council, and the finance committee, as requested by the school committee. The former superintendent was accessible but did not always keep the committee informed of district progress on projects, according to committee members interviewed. Those interviewed also stated that they evaluated the former superintendent annually based on goals. During this same period, personnel files revealed that the former superintendent did not evaluate administrators annually based on the Principles of Effective Administrative Leadership.

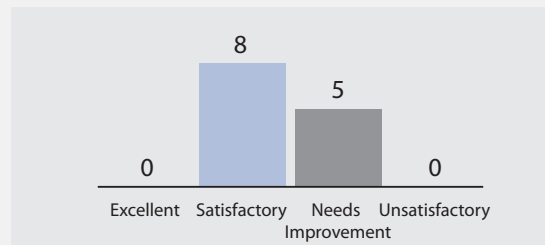
The school committee had a subcommittee structure, and these subcommittees made recommendations to the whole committee on topics such as negotiations, policy, and finance. Committee members were knowledgeable of their roles and responsibilities through attendance at Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) conferences, legislative updates from MASC, and completion of the required professional development workshops.

The school committee was involved in communication with its stakeholders through attendance at meetings in the community and through the development of electronic capabilities, such as the district website, blogs, and

Performance at a Glance

Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 13 performance indicators. Franklin received the following ratings:



Areas of Strength

- The district had a strategic plan for the period of 2004-2007 that contained mission and vision statements, values, and six goals that had benchmarks to measure success.
- The school committee and district and school leadership used student achievement data in the budget decision-making process and advocated for needed programs and services.
- The former superintendent delegated the curriculum development process along with instructional supervision responsibilities

Areas for Improvement

- School Improvement Plans (SIPs) were inconsistent and not aligned to the strategic plan.
- Budgets were not consistently developed collaboratively with principals during the period under review.

budget presentation video clips made public via www.youtube.com. The budget subcommittee had regular meetings with the town council and finance committee during the period under review.

Planning and Governance

The district had effective methods of gathering, analyzing, and using aggregated and disaggregated data to make changes to curriculum and instruction to improve student achievement. Committee members and administrators shared examples of data-driven decision-making, such as the modification of the alternative high school program, the implementation of Impact Math at the middle school, and an analysis of the district's foreign language program. Presentations on the MCAS test results were conducted at school committee meetings during the period under review and shared with the community via cable television.

The school committee governed through the development of a district policy manual. A policy subcommittee reviewed all policy proposals and made recommendations to the entire committee as needed. A strategic plan covered the period of 2004–2007 and contained the district's mission and vision statements and six goals. The goals addressed curriculum and instruction, professional and support staff, school climate, community support, financial management, and evaluation of and accountability for the strategic plan. Steering and development committees, made up of parents, school committee members, and school and town administrators, developed the plan which had as its main objective "improved student achievement." Each of the goals had measurable benchmarks and required data to report progress on an annual basis.

The school committee reviewed School Improvement Plans (SIPs) on an annual basis and stated that the inconsistencies in format made it difficult to review them in a timely manner. Crisis plans for each school in the district were not completed in a consistent or timely manner. Some administrators went ahead and developed plans while others waited and used plans from other districts. Collaboration took place during the period under review, including the placement of the district office in a new municipal building with town officials. Central office personnel worked on curriculum and instruction in a collaborative model with principals, curriculum teams, coordinators, and directors to improve student achievement.

Curriculum and Instruction

The Franklin Public Schools performed effectively in the areas of curriculum development and instructional practice — essential elements of efforts to improve student performance.

Aligned Curricula

During the period under review, the district continued to work on curriculum development. It aligned the curriculum to the state frameworks and district-specific learning standards, and it documented curricula for all content areas in a new and more comprehensive format. Teachers and leaders ensured that the curriculum aligned horizontally and vertically. All elementary schools used the same ELA and math programs but were allowed discretion in their use of supplementary materials. Principals, reading specialists, and math curriculum enhancement teachers (CETs) addressed alignment in meetings with teachers, and principals checked for alignment during classroom walk-throughs. The middle schools also used the same curricular programs and monitored instruction. At the high school, teachers had common planning time, shared common expectations, developed common writing rubrics, and administered common final exams. Grade 5 and 6 teachers and grade 8 and 9 teachers met twice each year to encourage vertical alignment between the elementary and middle schools and the middle schools and high school.

Curriculum teams, under the direction of the director of curriculum and instruction and led by team-appointed co-chairs, reviewed and revised curriculum using a five-phase process that relied on current research and formative and summative achievement data, including the MCAS test results, to inform their work. The district's curriculum teams represented all grade levels to ensure thorough analysis, discussion, decision-making, and communication.

Performance at a Glance

Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 10 performance indicators. Franklin received the following ratings:



Areas of Strength

- The Franklin Public Schools aligned curricula in all tested content areas to the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and learning standards as well as district-specific learning standards.
- Curriculum teams, principals, and others responsible for curriculum leadership collaborated to align curriculum both horizontally and vertically and to monitor alignment.
- To improve student achievement, curriculum teams were consistently reviewing, updating, and revising curricula in all tested content areas using a five-phase, research-based, data-driven process during the review period.
- Elementary and middle school principals provided key curriculum leadership in their respective schools, and the district distributed meaningful curriculum leadership to other staff members.

Areas for Improvement

- The district had an inadequate amount of updated and functional educational technology, particularly at the high school and at self-contained elementary schools.

They also included special education staff to ensure that the needs of the district's largest subgroup were being met. A number of new curriculum initiatives occurred during the period under review. For example, the district implemented a new math curriculum at the middle schools, chose new reading anthologies at the middle schools, re-sequenced social studies courses, participated in professional development to improve instruction and support district priorities, and modified the schedule at the middle schools to allocate additional instructional time in each core subject area.

Effective Instruction

Principals of the elementary and middle schools used their role as instructional leader to exercise meaningful influence on improving instruction. They collaborated with CETs and other specialists to monitor instruction through classroom walk-throughs and classroom observations, and followed up with discussions on instructional techniques either with individual teachers or in small and large group meetings. At the high school, the task of monitoring instructional improvement fell mainly to the CETs in each core content area, supported by the principal and four assistant principals. Throughout the district, professional development offered teachers and leaders opportunities for professional growth that aligned with instructional and curricular priorities at both the district and school levels. Across the district, leadership personnel, teachers, and parents voiced high expectations for teaching and learning.

Observations of 74 randomly selected ELA, math, and science classrooms at the elementary, middle, and high school levels revealed an average class size of 18 students. Observations also indicated inconsistent use, availability, and functionality of computers across the district. Examiners noted the student-to-computer ratio to be 6.1:1 at the elementary schools, 26.5:1 at the middle schools, and 138:1 at the high school, as the high school had allocated most computers to labs rather than classrooms. Overall, observations revealed positive classroom management in 96 percent of the observed classrooms, positive instructional practice in 78 percent, evidence of high expectations in 69 percent, positive student activity and behavior in 76 percent, and positive school climate in 89 percent of the observed classrooms.

Assessment and Program Evaluation

Student assessment data include a wealth of information for district and school leaders on strengths and weaknesses in the local system, providing valuable input on where they should target their efforts to improve achievement.

Student Assessment

The district used an array of testing and assessment analyses to develop the instructional programs for its students. Elementary and middle school principals had discretion regarding the specific assessment instruments teachers would use in ELA in addition to running records and common writing prompts, while the assessments used to measure progress in mathematics were more consistent throughout the district's elementary and middle schools. The work of the curriculum committees included the creation of grade-specific benchmarks. This task was ongoing during the time of the review. Interviewees noted that the results from several assessments proved to be accurate predictors of how students would perform on the MCAS tests.

Assessment analyses were conducted throughout the grade levels of the district, from the individual Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and Stanford Reading assessment analyses at the elementary level to analyses of results from common final exams at the high school. The district's director of instructional services and the district data analyst first reviewed, analyzed, and discussed the MCAS achievement results with building principals. The director of instructional services also regularly discussed the data with curriculum teams, reading specialists, coordinators, and CETs. Further analysis occurred at the building level. Classroom teachers received the resulting analyses from their principals, reading specialists, coordinators, and/or CETs.

The district made concerted efforts to inform the parents of students and the community at-large of the assessment results. These efforts included school committee

Performance at a Glance

Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 8 performance indicators. Franklin received the following ratings:



Areas of Strength

- The district regularly collected and analyzed student achievement data to improve instruction.
- The district and all its schools stressed the importance of all students taking the MCAS tests, which resulted in a near perfect record of student participation over the last four years.
- The district communicated the assessment results consistently and in a timely fashion to all staff members, parents, and community members.

presentations televised through the local cable channel, articles in regional and community newspapers, and direct communication with parents via individual school report cards and progress reports. The district regularly prepared assessment reports focused on student achievement and communicated those reports to the staff and the community. The analysis reports included comprehensive item analyses that identified academic strengths and weaknesses of particular grade-level curricula.

Program Evaluation

The district had a regular five-phase process to review and revise curricula based on assessment data. The districtwide curriculum committees in each major content area, made up of teachers from all grade levels and CETs, served under the direction of the director of instructional services. District administrators and curriculum teams used MCAS results and trends, district-generated data, and on-going curriculum review to evaluate programs and refine plans for addressing programmatic and academic needs. The MCAS improvement plan, professional development plan, budget appropriations, and curriculum team tasks reflected this systematic evaluation of programs. Other examples included purchase of a new grade 4 social studies textbook, a new middle school mathematics program, curriculum revisions in mathematics and ELA at grades K-8 to include modification/accommodation suggestions for students with disabilities, and revisions to the algebra and biology curricula at the high school.

When data analysis of achievement results or other research and evaluation such as surveys and/or external audits indicated that weaknesses existed in the instructional programs, the curriculum committees made modifications to the programs with improving student achievement and instructional practice as the primary goal. Specific examples cited included the adoption of the new Impact Math middle school math program for the 2005-2006 school year, the creation in 2005 of an English language learner (ELL) program for the small but growing population of ELL students, and the changing of both the algebra and biology programs at the high school from one-year offerings to two-year offerings for freshmen and sophomores identified as needing the extra time to learn the material.

Human Resource Management and Professional Development

To improve student academic performance, school districts must recruit certified teaching staff, offer teacher mentoring programs and professional development opportunities, and evaluate instructional effectiveness on a regular basis in accordance with the provisions of the Education Reform Act of 1993.

Hiring Practices and Certification

The Franklin Public Schools had a full-time human resources director who managed hiring procedures, monitored the status of staff certification, and filed for waivers when necessary. The district had an administrative advisory document that outlined hiring expectations and guided the hiring process. The advisory included procedures related to vacancies, advertising, applications, qualifications, and interviews. The district administrators posted positions on the district website, advertised in newspapers, and attended job fairs. The district and all schools had a hiring process that included use of a committee to conduct interviews and make hiring recommendations. Interviewees indicated that the district did not have any financial barriers to hiring teachers or administrators. The district provided licensure data that showed all administrators and all but eight teachers had appropriate certifications. The district had applied for waivers for unlicensed staff.

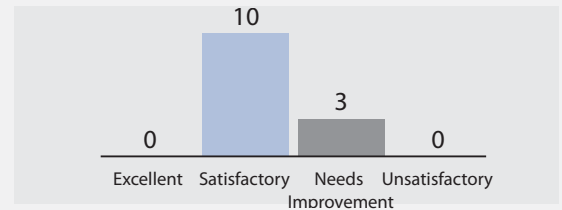
Professional Development

The district provided professional development and mentoring programs to support teachers during the period under review and adequately funded the programs. The mentoring program was a two-year program, and the district had trained approximately 60 to 70 mentors. The district had a substantial and well-defined professional development program in place during the

Performance at a Glance

Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 13 performance indicators. Franklin received the following ratings:



Areas of Strength

- The district provided a professional development program and a two-year mentoring program to support teachers.
- The professional development offerings included sessions in data analysis skills.
- Administrators performed active supervision in the form of formal and informal classroom observations and walk-throughs.
- The district provided safety, crisis, and emergency training and had resources in place to react to emergencies.

Areas for Improvement

- The district had not trained administrators with evaluation responsibilities in classroom observation techniques.
- Safety and crisis training was not consistent in all schools due to the different plans in the schools.

period under review, which included professional development in data analysis to support instructional strategies. The district identified professional development needs from a number of sources, including student achievement data and teacher evaluations and observations. The district website included a link to professional development opportunities, and staff could register for professional development offerings online.

Professional development in the district consisted of three building-based half days and two districtwide full days. Schools offered opportunities for professional development related to school-specific issues, while the districtwide days provided the district the opportunity to focus on professional development skills for all teachers. In addition, the district provided significant reimbursement for graduate courses and outside workshops. Teachers were given opportunities to advance to stipended positions or administrative positions. Staff turnover in the district was low.

Evaluation

Not all administrators had received training in Research for Better Teaching (RBT) observational analysis techniques, but the district indicated that administrators who had not received the training would receive it in the near future. The performance evaluation process did not hold administrators or teachers accountable for student achievement. Principals conducted classroom observations, but the evaluation cycle for teachers in place during the period under review did not comply with state statute. Most personnel files included summative evaluations for professional status teachers, but they were not performed every two years as mandated. Professional status teachers were given alternative options to demonstrate professional growth in the years they did not receive a summative evaluation. The principals conducted the evaluations of non-professional status teachers annually as required by statute. The superintendent did not conduct annual evaluations for all administrators in accordance with MGL Chapter 71, Section 38. A review of 32 administrator personnel files showed that no administrator received an annual evaluation every year during the period under review.

Access, Participation, and Student Academic Support

Students who are at risk of failing or dropping out need additional support to ensure that they stay in school and achieve proficiency.

Services

The Franklin school district and its individual schools performed aggregated and disaggregated analysis of MCAS and other assessment data and provided academic support services at all levels. Examples of districtwide assessments included the MCAS tests, running records, mathematics unit tests, and writing prompts. Principals at the elementary and middle school levels had discretion to administer additional ELA assessments. Many programs were in place for at-risk students, including MCAS test support, special education services, and an enhanced ELL program. In addition, specific intervention plans were in place to help struggling students. For instance, Individual Student Success Plans (ISSPs) were created for all students scoring below 230 on the MCAS exams, and each school had a team in place to assist teachers of students having difficulty in regular education classes. The district provided assistance for homeless and transient students and followed the McKinney-Vento regulations. Further, the district set up procedures and practices to make transitions into school and between schools easier for students and parents.

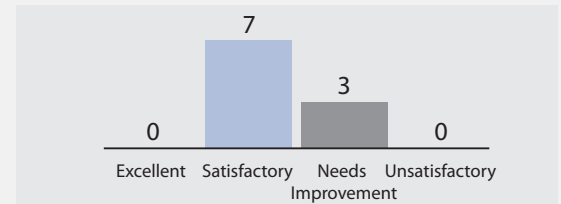
Subgroup Participation

The major subgroup in the district was students with disabilities, who comprised approximately 15 percent of the total enrollment of approximately 6,100 students. The district conducted data analysis for the special education subgroup because of special education AYP issues. Based on data analysis, the district developed a supplemental mathematics curriculum.

Performance at a Glance

Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 10 performance indicators. Franklin received the following ratings:



Areas of Strength

- Central office personnel worked collaboratively with principals, assistant principals, CETs, and teachers to review and analyze student achievement data, including subgroup analysis of special education data.
- The district used formative and summative assessments and provided supplementary and academic support programs for students at all levels of proficiency in all content areas.
- The district's attendance rate was approximately two percentage points above than the state average for each of the three years under review.

Areas for Improvement

- Despite early intervention programs, the results of the 2006 grade 4 MCAS ELA exam showed that students with disabilities and low-income students attained proficiency at a lower rate than did other Franklin students.
- Beyond inclusion, few strategies were in place for increasing opportunities for special education and low-income students to participate in advanced or accelerated courses.

The district had accelerated courses, including Advanced Placement (AP) and honors courses, but regular education students constituted most of the enrollment in these courses. The district used an inclusion model to increase the percentage of special education students participating in accelerated courses at the high school.

Attendance

The district had attendance policies in force at all schools and documented consequences for unexcused absences in student handbooks. In 2006, the district had an average attendance rate of 96.2 percent and an average chronic absenteeism rate of 5.4 percent. The district implemented procedures and practices to aggressively monitor attendance and account for all students who did not arrive at school.

During the 2005–2006 school year, teachers were absent an average of 11.9 days, or 11.1 days excluding professional development days. Overall, the average teacher attendance rate was 96.2 percent. Teacher attendance varied among schools with the average number of days absent ranging from 7.8 to 16.3 days. The schools used substitute teachers to maintain consistent instruction. The district issued a handbook to substitutes and substitutes attended an orientation.

Discipline and Dropout Prevention

The district had low rates of in- and out-of-school suspensions and the high school did not report any in-school suspensions. Almost all of the district's in-school suspensions occurred at two of the three middle schools, although all suspension rates in Franklin were below the state averages during the period under review. The district had a graduation rate of 91.3 percent in 2006 for a cohort of 367 students, and 4.1 percent of the cohort had dropped out, according to district data on the DOE website. The district had practices and procedures in place to monitor and assist students and the parents of students who considered dropping out, including an alternative education program, which provided an educational setting for grade 9–12 students who had difficulty in regular classes, and flexible scheduling.

Financial and Asset Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

Effective districts develop budgets based on student needs, submit financial documentation in a timely fashion, employ staff with MCPPO credentials, and ensure that their facilities are well maintained.

Budget Process

Town and school officials worked cooperatively during the budget development process throughout the period under review. The superintendent and town administrator met to review available funding for the schools, and a budget subcommittee of elected town and school officials as well as administrators reviewed the school budget in detail. Principals and school council members had opportunities to prepare and communicate budget needs to the school committee during Saturday workshops, except in 2005 when they were given a bottom line representing available funds and told to stay within it. The public had opportunities to learn about the budget and give feedback during school committee open hearings and subsequent town council budget sessions.

The district used student achievement and other data to justify budget initiatives, including new middle school math and social studies programs, a special education math initiative, new special education programs, ELA materials and reading specialists for grades K-8, and summer remediation programs. It added a social worker and modified its alternative education program for at-risk children in order to improve their achievement and keep them in school. District administrators made other budget and program decisions in order to be more cost effective, such as collaboration with the town in accounting and purchasing procedures, bringing special education students in-house from tuition placements, and an energy usage analysis to improve efficiencies and lower costs.

Performance at a Glance

Ratings on Performance Indicators

In this area, districts are rated on 13 performance indicators. Franklin received the following ratings:



Areas of Strength

- District and school officials worked together closely to prepare and adopt school budgets.
- The town used its stabilization fund and other one-time sources to balance budgets during the period under review, allowing the district to maintain class size as enrollment increased and new schools opened.
- The district used the results of the analysis of student achievement and budget data to reduce expenditures and allocate revenue for academic programs and materials.

Areas for Improvement

- Although expenditures grew by approximately six percent annually during the period under review, the increases were not enough to fully fund the costs associated with increased enrollment, additional personnel, and other contractual obligations.

Financial Support

Although the district per pupil cost was below the state average and enrollments increased, the district avoided major layoffs and class size increases during the period under review. The town supported school budgets that would fund fixed cost increases, including those associated with contractual salary agreements, increased enrollments, and utility costs, by using its financial reserves to balance the budget. However, some school programs and staffing, such as elementary physical education/health, foreign language, music, and custodial and administrative support, were reduced. The district's budget was in deficit during the period under review, increasing to \$413,079 in FY 2006, due to under-budgeting certain expenditures and overestimating revenues; the district covered budget deficits by using revolving fund balances and, in FY 2006, charging special education expenses to the FY 2007 circuit breaker reimbursement.

The town and school district were cooperative in a variety of ways. They shared facilities and technology directors and collaborated on purchasing. After both business offices adopted the MUNIS accounting software in 2006, reconciliations and more efficient purchasing procedures were instituted, and administrators were provided with immediate access to reports and budget balances.

Facilities and Safety

School buildings were clean and well maintained, but the district had no written preventative maintenance plan. NEASC reports cited shortcomings in the high school building, and the district completed some safety and other minor renovations recommended in the report. The town prepared plans for a major renovation project at the high school for when funding would be available. Two newly built schools opened during the period under review. The town had a six-year capital plan that included needed school renovations and regularly funded the plan. Security and safety were a priority. The schools controlled entry of visitors during the school day using locked doors, schools installed video cameras, and schools installed electronic keys to restrict access and record entry. The schools regularly maintained alarm systems, sprinklers, and mechanical systems.

CONCLUSION

The Franklin Public Schools was considered to be a 'Very High' performing district, marked by student achievement that was 'Very High' in ELA and 'High' in math during the review period as measured by the MCAS tests. Three-fourths of Franklin's students scored at or above the proficiency standard on the 2006 administration of the MCAS tests. The EQA gave the district a Management Quality Index rating of 'Strong,' with the highest rating in Assessment and Program Evaluation, and the lowest in Leadership and Governance.

At the time of the review, Franklin Public Schools was working under a strategic plan for the years 2004-2007 that had been developed through the collaboration of parents, school committee members, and school and town administrators. The plan's main objective was to improve student achievement, and it contained six goals with measurable benchmarks to achieve this goal. The district analyzed student achievement data, including aggregated and disaggregated MCAS test results and other assessment results, in order to improve instruction. Decisions made based on data analysis included the adoption of the Impact Math series at the middle school level to improve student results on the MCAS math tests, especially for the special education subgroup which had not made adequate yearly progress in math. Also, the district revised the middle school schedule to provide increased instructional time in the core content areas, and it modified the alternative high school program to provide more inclusion for special education students.

The district had aligned its curricula to the state curriculum frameworks and standards and to the Franklin-specific learning standards. Curriculum teams continuously reviewed and revised the curriculum throughout a five-year cycle to allow changes to be made easily and promptly as needed. The teams also worked to create specific grade-level benchmarks to assist in measuring student progress. Principals, curriculum enhancement teachers (CETs), and teaching specialists monitored instruction for alignment to the curriculum through formal and informal classroom walk-throughs and addressed issues in meetings with teachers.

The district provided training for administrators in Research for Better Teaching (RBT) observational analysis techniques to help them in their roles as evaluators. Those administrators who had not yet received this training were to receive it in the future. Administrators were not evaluated annually, and professional status teachers were not evaluated every two years, as required by statute. Non-professional status teachers were evaluated annually as required by the Education Reform Act. A two-year mentoring program was in place for new teachers. Professional development offerings focused on school and district goals and provided sup-

port for new programs, such as the Impact Math series. Both programs were adequately funded during the period under review.

Like many other districts in Massachusetts, Franklin Public Schools faced major financial challenges during the period under review. The town of Franklin experienced explosive growth over the last two decades, as it became a popular community that had easy access to Boston and Providence through a network of nearby highways and a commuter rail system that connects Franklin to Boston. As a result, the district has expanded to 11 schools that support an enrollment of approximately 6,100 students, with a faculty that exceeds 500. District financial reports showed that from FY 2003 to FY 2006 expenditures grew from \$39,727,824 to \$47,723,311, at an annual rate of approximately six percent. These increases were insufficient to fully fund costs associated with increased enrollment, additional special education teachers, contractual salary increases, and utilities.

For a number of years, the town has used other town revenue sources to support the school district. For example, the town periodically used stabilization revenue to fund school district budget shortfalls. Fortunately, in the spring of 2007, at the time of the EQA review, community members voted a Proposition 2½ override to increase taxes to fund rising school district expenses. The vote saved a number of teaching and administrative jobs and solidified the community's commitment to the school district and the educational needs of the children in Franklin.

APPENDIX A: EQA'S DISTRICT EXAMINATION PROCESS

EQA's examination process provides successively deeper levels of information about student performance. All school districts receive an MCAS data review annually, but they do not all receive the full examination every year.

Based on the MCAS results, Educational Management Audit Council (EMAC) policy, and random sampling, approximately 60 districts statewide received a site review. Still other districts – those that do not meet certain performance criteria set by the state Department of Education – received an even more detailed review.

Data-Driven Assessment

Annually, the DOE and EQA's staff assess each public school district's results on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests to find out how students are performing. This review seeks to answer five basic questions:

1. Are the district's students reaching proficiency levels on MCAS?
2. Do MCAS test results vary among subgroups of students (such as minority and low-income students and students with disabilities)?
3. Has the district's MCAS test performance improved over time?
4. Has the MCAS test performance of the district's student subgroups improved over time?
5. Are all eligible students participating in required state assessments?

Standards-Based Examination

Districts with MCAS results that fall within certain thresholds of performance, particularly districts that score below average, may be selected to receive a site review. This review seeks to provide a more complete picture of why the district is performing at that level, examining district management, planning, and actions and how they are implemented at the building level. It focuses in particular on whether the district uses data to inform its efforts.

The report analyzes district performance in six major areas: leadership, governance, and communication; curriculum and instruction; assessment and program evaluation; human resource management and professional development; access, participation, and student academic support; and financial and asset management effectiveness and efficiency. EQA examines a total of 67 indicators to assess whether the district is meeting the standards and provides a rating for each indicator.

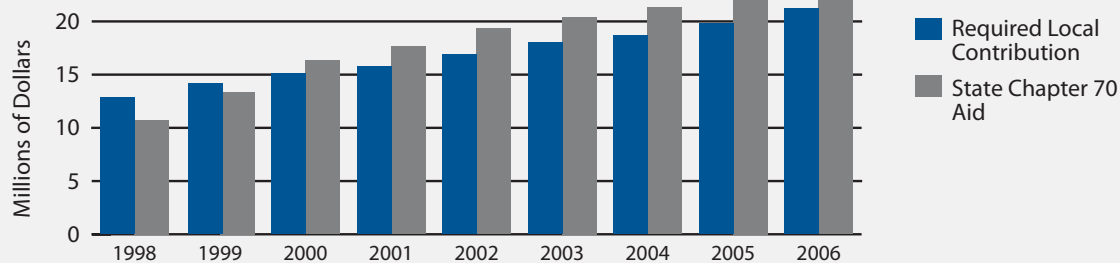
APPENDIX B: EXPLANATION OF TERMS USED IN EQA REPORTS

ABA: Applied Behavioral Analysis**ADA:** Average Daily Attendance**ALT:** MCAS Alternative Assessment**API:** Average Proficiency Index (of the English Language Arts Proficiency Index and Math Proficiency Index for all students)**ATA:** Accountability and Targeted Assistance**AYP:** Adequate Yearly Progress**CAP:** Corrective Action Plan**CBM:** Curriculum-Based Measures**CD:** Competency Determination — the state's interim Adequate Yearly Progress indicator for high schools based on grade 10 MCAS test passing rates**CMP:** Connected Math Program**CORI:** Criminal Offender Record Information**CPI:** Composite Proficiency Index — a 100-point index combining students' scores on the standard MCAS and MCAS Alternative Assessment (ALT)**CPR:** Coordinated Program Review — conducted on Federal Education Acts by the DOE**CRT:** Criterion-Referenced Test**CSR:** Comprehensive School Reform**DCAP:** District Curriculum Accommodation Plan**DIBELS:** Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills**DIP:** District Improvement Plan**DOE:** Department of Education**DPDP:** District Professional Development Plan**DRA:** Developmental Reading Assessment**ELA:** English Language Arts**ELL:** English Language Learners**EPI:** English Language Arts Proficiency Index**ESL:** English as a Second Language**FLNE:** First Language Not English**FRL/N:** Free and Reduced-Price Lunch/No**FRL/Y:** Free and Reduced-Price Lunch/Yes**FTE:** Full-Time Equivalent**FY:** Fiscal Year**Gap Analysis:** A statistical method to analyze the relationships between and among district and subgroup performance and the standard of 100 percent proficiency**GASB:** Government Accounting Standards Board**GMADE:** Group Math Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation**GRADE:** Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation**GRADU:** The graduation yield rate for a class four years from entry**IEP:** Individualized Education Program**Improvement Gap:** A measure of change in a combination of the proficiency gap and performance gap between two points in time; a positive improvement gap will show improvement and convergence between subgroups' performance over time**IPDP:** Individual Professional Development Plan**IRIP:** Individual Reading Improvement Plan**ISSP:** Individual Student Success Plan**LASW:** Looking at Student Work**LEP:** Limited English Proficient**MASBO:** Massachusetts Association of School Business Officials**MASC:** Massachusetts Association of School Committees**MASS:** Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents**MAVA:** Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators**MCAS:** Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System**MCAS-Alt:** Alternative Assessment — a portfolio option for special needs students to demonstrate proficiency**MCPPPO:** Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official**MELA-O:** Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral**MEPA:** Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment**MPI:** Math Proficiency Index**MQI:** Management Quality Index — an indicator of the relative strength and effectiveness of a district's management system**MUNIS:** Municipal Information System**NAEYC:** National Association for the Education of Young Children**NCLB:** No Child Left Behind**NEASC:** New England Association of Schools and Colleges**NRT:** Norm-Referenced Test**NSBA:** National School Boards Association**NSS:** Net School Spending**Performance Gap:** A measure of the range of the difference of performance between any subgroup's Proficiency Index and another subgroup's in a given district**PI:** Proficiency Index — a number between 0–100 representing the extent to which students are progressing toward proficiency**PIM:** Performance Improvement Management**POA:** Program Quality Assurance — a division of the DOE responsible for conducting the Coordinated Program Review process**Proficiency Gap:** A measure of a district or subgroup's Proficiency Index and its distance from 100 percent proficiency**QRI:** Qualitative Reading Inventory**Rate of Improvement:** The result of dividing the gain (improvement in achievement as measured by Proficiency Index points) by the proficiency gap**SAT:** A test administered by the Educational Testing Service to 11th and 12th graders**SEI:** Sheltered English Immersion**SIMS:** Student Information Management System**SIOP:** Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol**SIP:** School Improvement Plan**SPED:** Special Education**STE:** Science and Technology/Engineering**TerraNova:** K–12 norm-referenced test series published by CTB/McGraw-Hill

APPENDIX C: STATE AND LOCAL FUNDING, 1998–2006

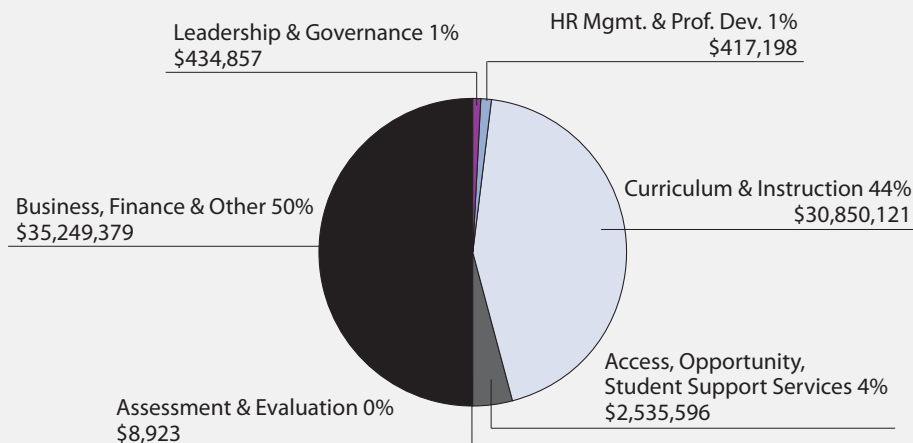
A school district's funding is determined in part by the Chapter 70 program – the major program of state aid to public elementary and secondary schools. In addition to supporting school operations, it also establishes minimum requirements for each municipality's share of school costs. The following chart shows the amount of Franklin's funding that was derived from the state and the amount that the town was required to contribute. The district exceeded the state net school spending requirement in each year of the review period. From FY 2004 to FY 2006, net school spending increased from \$43,510,159 to \$51,355,664; Chapter 70 aid increased from \$21,308,583 to \$23,359,339; the required local contribution increased from \$18,682,531 to \$21,157,822; and the foundation enrollment increased from 6,025 to 6,265. Chapter 70 aid as a percentage of actual net school spending decreased from 49 to 46 percent over this period. From FY 2004 to FY 2005, total curriculum and instruction expenditures as a percentage of total net school spending remained at 67 percent.

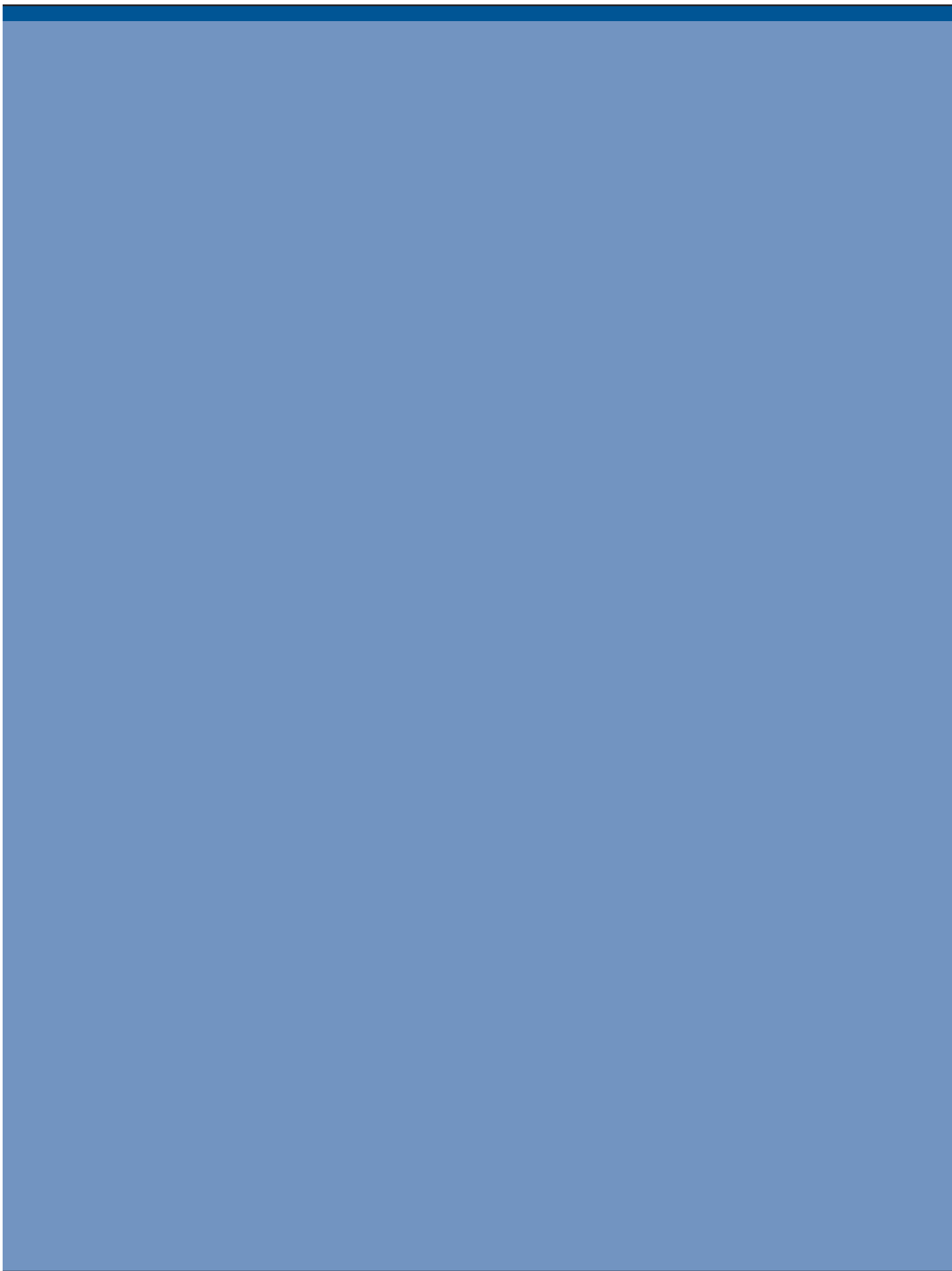
WHERE DOES THE FUNDING FOR FRANKLIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS COME FROM?



HOW IS THE FUNDING FOR FRANKLIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS ALLOCATED?

FY05 Expenditures By EQA Standards (With City/Town Charges)





EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AUDIT COUNCIL
Office of Educational Quality and Accountability

One Ashburton Place, Room 1403, Boston, MA 02108 ■ (617) 727-2398 ■ Fax: (617) 727-0049

65 South Street, Suite 104, Hopkinton, MA 01748 ■ (508) 435-5126 ■ Fax: (508) 435-5249